

# Middlesex Community College

## The Need for Mental and Physical Health Services

(presented by Abigail Tirone)

*Note: Statistics referenced in this testimony are attached with more information.*

Currently, there are 2,896 students on Middlesex Community College campus, and, according to NAMI (National Alliance of Mental Illness), if one in FOUR college students suffer from some sort of mental illness, then 724 of our students alone are affected. In addition, we have 100+ veterans on campus suffering from PTSD with no easily accessible resources for either demographic.

I cannot express enough how many friends and students I know who have struggled or had to withdraw from classes due to a mental illness whether depression, anxiety, or something more serious such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. Similarly, the many faculty I have spoken with described scenarios where they have had a student break down in the middle of class, was academically struggling, or just suddenly dropped out because of a mental illness. A majority of the reason why is because we, as one of many community colleges, lack the resources to not only aid students, but support faculty. I myself have been diagnosed with both depression and anxiety, and have needed someone to go to when I had several anxiety attacks during school hours. Likewise, when I was pulled off my medication because of a physical ailment for two months, I could not focus enough to complete assignments on time and I needed someone to advocate for me (just like countless others with similar circumstances). Furthermore, we do not have the funds for services at night at all!

According to a study done by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) for the reasons why students drop out of college, 64% of the students they interviewed dropped out due to mental health reasons and 50% of those because they did not have access to mental health services and supports.

[http://www2.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find\\_Support/NAMI\\_on\\_Campus1/collegereport.pdf](http://www2.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find_Support/NAMI_on_Campus1/collegereport.pdf)

Community colleges have a large variety of services, anywhere from innovative curriculum, developmental education, and programs supporting work-force development. However, another mission of the community college is to support the "wholeness" of individuals. Much research suggests that "wellness" contributes to student success. Therefore, budgeting for higher education has to include not only money for the liberal arts and vocational training, but professional support for the mental health needs of our students.

We realize that the solution is not one that will be easily resolved, nor is it a simple process. However, we as students would like to propose an approval for budgeting a small amount as a temporary solution in order to remedy this situation until a more permanent solution can be attained.

Some of the avenues community colleges would need budgeted in order to temporarily alleviate the problem would include hosting and promoting:

1. Resources Awareness—brochures, contact information, and booths
2. Quiet spaces for students

3. Monthly Health and Wellness speakers
4. Stress reduction events/activities
  - Two additional NAMI statistics
5. Mental Health Awareness
6. Suicide Awareness and Prevention
7. More mental health trainings for faculty and staff as extremely important
8. Informational and Interactive Health Fairs (for things such as various cancers, disorders and diseases)
9. Orchestrate clinics that would offer health screenings and flu shots

Student success is dependent on educational funding that addresses the "whole" person.

In conclusion, while we can bring further data/information next budget cycle to ensure a more permanent solution for all community colleges, I would encourage you to please consider budgeting for this temporary solution, not only for our students' success, but ultimately, our state and our country's success.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak, and have a good evening.